



Annie App for Veterans

User Manual

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Connected Care

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User Manual

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Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Annie mobile application (app) is a Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging capability that promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care. When your provider or a member of your VA health care team signs you up for Annie for a health issue, you will receive automated messages that prompt you to track your own health. You are asked to reply to messages so that Annie can let you know how you are doing. Annie also can send you appointment reminders and messages from your local VA medical facility.

You can use Annie if you have a basic cell phone that includes a texting feature (also known as SMS text messaging). If you have a smartphone, you can use the texting feature of the phone, or use the Annie App for Veterans. You can also use the Annie App for Veterans with a computer or mobile device connected to the Internet. Whichever way you choose, Annie can help you track your health on your own.

The chart below shows some differences between using your phone's texting feature (SMS text messaging) and using the Annie App for Veterans on a smartphone or computer:

	SMS Text Messaging	Annie App for Veterans (smartphone, tablet or personal computer with Internet access)
How to use Annie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the SMS text messaging feature on a smartphone or basic cell phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open the Annie App for Veterans with a smartphone or tablet Use a computer or mobile device with Internet access
About your messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You see text messages from Annie and reply by texting Annie on your phone Text messages between you and Annie are NOT secure. Messages reminding you to track your health or about an appointment are not encrypted (not scrambled). Anyone who has your phone can read your messages Text messaging costs may apply, depending on your cell phone plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can log in to the Annie App on your phone or computer and then see and reply to messages from Annie Messages between you and Annie are secure. Messages reminding you to track your health or about an appointment are encrypted. You can only see your messages by securely logging in You can see all messages and readings you sent to Annie You can see a schedule of messages Annie will send You can manage your settings and message preferences

NOTE: You can combine different ways of using Annie, combining text messaging and other features. For example, you can receive texts on your cell phone (not secure), and also use the Annie App for Veterans on your computer to review all your messages (secure) and see charts of your readings.

To receive appointment reminders and VA medical facility messages from Annie, you can sign up any time on your own.

To use Annie to track your health, you need to talk to your provider or VA health care team, who can find the best Annie health tracking option that is right for you.

IMPORTANT: Annie is for self-care. Your text and message replies to Annie are kept in a computer system. Your VA health care team will be able to view the messages, but will not routinely review them. Annie is not a way to text your VA clinician. You are responsible for your own health and should contact your VA health care team directly when you have health issues. Text messaging is not secure (texts can be read by anyone with access to your phone) and has costs, depending on your plan.

Annie is named after Lieutenant Annie G. Fox, the first woman to receive the Purple Heart for combat. She was Chief Nurse in the Army Nurse Corps at Hickman Field, Pearl Harbor.

The Basics

This user manual provides an in-depth, step-by-step guide for using the Annie App for Veterans. The directions were written to assist with using the Annie App on a smartphone, but also apply to using the Annie App via a Web browser on your computer.

The Annie App is a Web app and can be used on Internet capable devices, such as a smartphone, personal computer or tablet. It is available for Windows, iOS and Android operating systems, and is supported by these Internet browsers:

1. Internet Explorer 9
2. Safari 7
3. Firefox 31

To use the Annie App for Veterans, you must:

1. Be enrolled in VA health care.
2. Have a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account – If you do not have this account, or you are not sure, visit mobile.va.gov/dslogon for more information.
3. Have a smartphone and/or a computer with Internet access. NOTE: SMS text messaging costs will depend on your messaging preference and cell phone usage plan.

Setting up the app

When you first use the Annie App, you will see an End User License Agreement (EULA) and Notice of Privacy Practices (Notice) > Read the EULA and Notice > If you agree to the terms, tap **Accept** to proceed to the Annie App > Type in your DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account user name and password > Tap **Sign In** > You will go to a Right of Access screen (**NOTE:** If you have provided your Right of Access for another VA app, you will proceed into the app's Patient Registration screen) > Read the **Request for Access to Your Health Information** > If you would like to continue, tap **Next** > You will go to a Review screen > Read VA Form 10-5345a > If you agree, tap **Verify** to "sign" the form > If you are not yet registered to use Annie, then you will proceed into the app's Patient Registration screen > Tap **I consent to Participate in the Program** > A pop-up "Annie: VA's SMS Text Messaging Program Information & Disclosure Factsheet" box will appear > Read the background information, patient responsibilities and risks covered in the factsheet, and scroll to the bottom of the box > If you accept the patient responsibilities and risks covered in the factsheet, tap **I Consent** > The "I Consent to Participate in the Program" checkbox will be checked, and you will see the date and time you consented > You will go to the Account screen where you will see three tabs > Tap a tab to expand its settings and management options > Choose or fill out your information and settings preferences (You can adjust the settings you originally enter at any time by tapping **Account** at the top of your screen):

- **Appointment/Info Messages** – To indicate the types of messages you would like to receive, tap the checkbox(es) next to Appointment Reminders (which will be sent three days and one day before an appointment) and/or VA Medical Center (VAMC) Facility Messages. If you checked VAMC Facility Messages, tap the bar under Select a Facility > A drop-down menu will appear > Tap the name of the medical facility from which you would like to receive messages.
- **Patient's Preferences** – Tap the circle next to the type of device you use. If you elect to use the smartphone app for messages, you can also check the box to sign up to receive an SMS text alert from Annie indicating that you have received a new message within the app.
- **Patient Info** – Your name and other identifying information will appear. **NOTE:** This information is pulled from official records and cannot be edited in the app (if your information is not correct, please inform your VA health care team). Type in your mobile phone number > Tap the bar under Time Zone, and tap your preferred time zone from the drop-down menu that appears > If desired, type in your home phone number and email address.

Tap **Submit** > You will see a Registration Success! screen > You will receive a message from Annie on the mobile device associated with the number you registered > Follow Annie's instructions in the message to respond, which will complete your registration. The next time you log in, you will proceed directly into the app after you enter your DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account user name and password.

Right Of Access

Request for Access to Your Health Information

In order to be granted access to your information via mobile applications, Federal law requires your approval for release of your health information. In this case, you are requesting the release of all available Veteran Administration (VA) electronic personal information and personal health information including VA staff entered information and self-entered information to yourself. The release of your health information will be done securely via VA-certified mobile applications. Your information is both protected by and accessed with your DSLogon account. On the next screen, you will be asked to electronically sign a VA Form 10-5345a which is an individual request for a copy of their own health information. By submitting the form, your electronic signature will be captured based upon your DSLogon authentication into this app. If you do not submit the form, your information cannot be made available to you through the mobile applications and you will not be able to access certain VA-certified mobile apps.

Click next to continue or you can cancel.

Cancel Next

Note to smartphone owners

If you have a smartphone and select SMS text messages in your Settings (Preferences), then Annie will send non-secure text messages to your phone instead of secure messages to the Annie App. If you select Annie App in Preferences, you can check the box to receive SMS text alerts from Annie notifying you when you have a new, secure message available within the Annie App. You then open the Annie App, and log in to view the actual message.

The screenshot shows the 'Account' settings page of the Annie App. At the top, the title 'Account' is displayed. Below it, a note states '* indicates a required field'. A consent section shows a checked box for 'I Consent to Participate in Program' with a timestamp of '03/24/2015 12:36 PM'. The main content area has three expandable sections: 'Appointment/Info Messages' (expanded with a plus icon), 'Preferences' (collapsed with a minus icon), and 'Patient Info' (collapsed with a plus icon). The 'Preferences' section is currently visible, showing three radio button options: 'Standard SMS text messaging (non-secure & text messaging rates will apply)' (selected), 'Annie App (secure, but requires smartphone & DS Logon Premium account)', and 'Receive SMS alert text message when new message is available (text messaging rates will apply)' (unchecked). At the bottom right, there are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

Account

* indicates a required field

☒ [I Consent to Participate in Program](#) 03/24/2015 12:36 PM

+ Appointment/Info Messages

- Preferences

- ☒ Standard SMS text messaging (non-secure & text messaging rates will apply)
- ☐ Annie App (secure, but requires smartphone & DS Logon Premium account)
- ☐ Receive SMS alert text message when new message is available (text messaging rates will apply)

+ Patient Info

Save Cancel

Logging in to the app after you have initially set it up

Access the Annie App > Type in your DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account user name and password > Tap **Sign In**.

Stopping, pausing and resuming Annie

You can stop/start and pause/resume messages with Annie at any time using simple texts or message replies.

- **Stop/Start** – To stop receiving messages from Annie, type and send the message: “STOP”. To start receiving messages again, type and send the message: “START.” **NOTE:** You will have to notify your VA health care team that you have begun using Annie again so that your VA health care team can re-enable your protocols or create new protocols for you.
- **Pause/Resume** – To halt messages from Annie temporarily, type and send the message: “PAUSE.” To start receiving messages again, type and send the message “RESUME.” Annie will automatically begin sending you messages again.

NOTE: Stopping or pausing messages from Annie will not cease the sending of Appointment Reminders and VAMC Facility Messages, but you can stop these messages by changing your Appointment/Info Messages preferences under the Account tab. If you send the command Help to Annie, Annie will respond with help desk information and a list of the available Annie commands.

Commands can be sent either from your registered mobile phone or by using the Annie App for Veterans. The following commands are recognized:

- **START** - Confirm your participation and begin receiving messages from the Annie system.
- **STOP** - Stop receiving messages from the Annie system.
- **PAUSE** - Temporarily stop receiving messages from the Annie system.
- **RESUME** - Resume receiving messages from the Annie system.
- **HELP** - Annie system responds with help desk information and a list of the available text commands.

Getting to know the app

There are six tabs on the top of the screen that let you easily navigate the Annie App:

- **Messages** – Read messages you have sent to or received from Annie.
- **Reports** – See charts and tables of your health tracking information.
- **Schedule** – See the type of messages you will receive from Annie (e.g., requests for you to submit your tracking information, educational messages, etc.) and when they will be sent.
- **Account** – View and change your settings (mobile phone number, time zone, email, etc.) from when you first registered, and change your preferences. To adjust your account information, make the changes as necessary, and tap **Save**.
- **About** – Access descriptions of the app and links to other training materials and resources, such as a Quick Start Guide, Slideshow and Frequently Asked Questions.
- **Log Out** – Exit the Annie App.

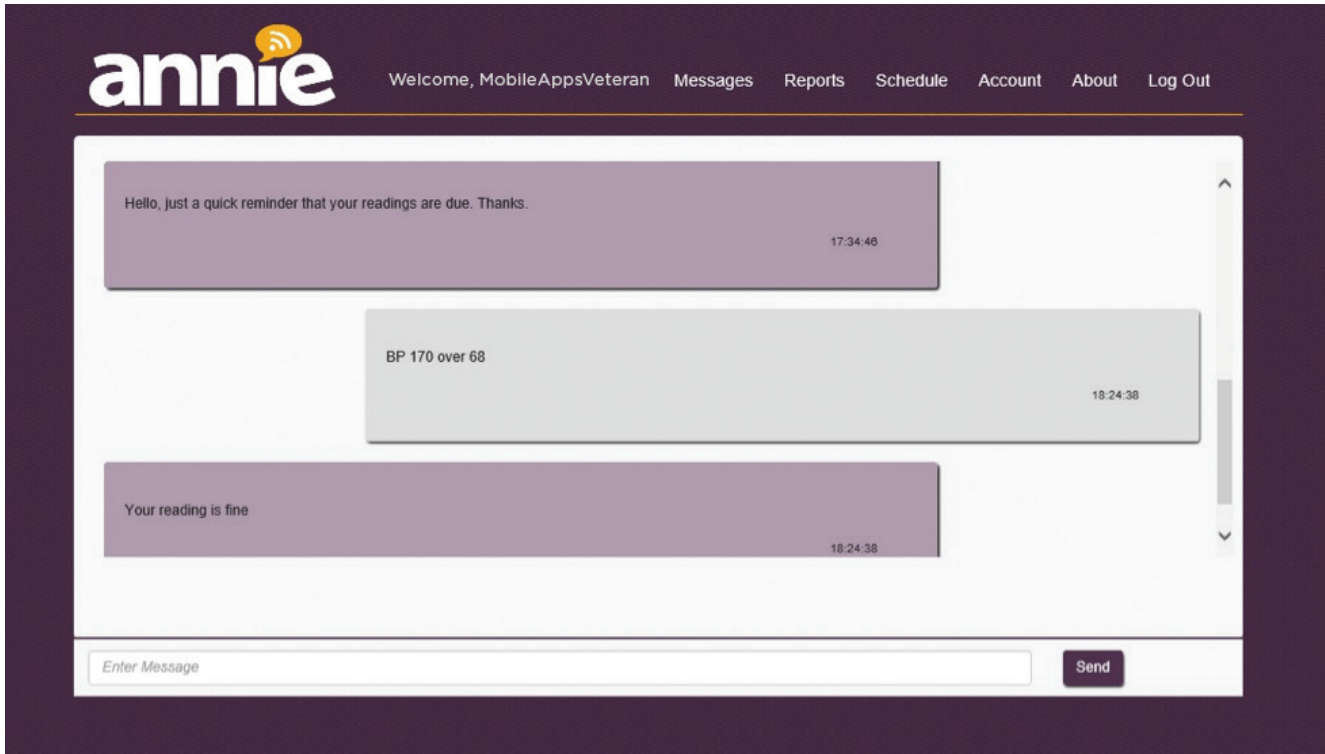
Tap on a tab to go to the corresponding screen.

Logging out

Tap the **Log Out** tab at the top of the screen.

Messages

Messages you receive and send using Annie can help you manage your health and medical conditions – offering care that is personal and convenient no matter where you live.



Reading your message history

Every message you receive and send is stored in Annie so that you can review them any time. To see your past messages, tap the **Messages** tab at the top of the screen > Messages that you sent to and received from Annie will be displayed, including dates and times > Scroll through the messages by using the bars to the right and below the messages.

Sending a message

You can send a message to Annie by using the Annie App or by using your phone's text messaging feature which, as described above, is not secure. For either method, Annie will first send a message that asks you to respond with a health measure. When you respond to Annie by sending your readings (such as your blood pressure measurement), you **MUST START** your message with a keyword or abbreviation so that Annie understands your message. Annie uses these keywords to know what kind of information you are sending. The letters can be upper or lower case. Spelling has to be EXACT. Depending on the information you send, begin your message with one of the following keywords or abbreviations (see terms in bold):

When Annie asks you to send this information	Start your message response with
Blood Pressure	BP or BLOOD
Pulse Oximetry (SpO2) or Oxygen level	OX or OXYGEN
Blood Glucose or Sugar	BG or GLUCOSE or SUGAR
Glucose Before Eating	BGB or BEFORE
Glucose After Eating	BGA or AFTER
Weight Loss	WE or WEIGHT
Caloric Intake	CAL or CALORIES
Amount of Exercise	EXERCISE
Temperature	TEMP
Pulse	PULSE

For example, if Annie asked you to send your temperature, and your reading at home is 98°F, you would type: **TEMP 98** or **temp 98**. If you responded with **98**, without the 'Temp', Annie would not understand your message. If you use the Annie App, tap **Messages** at the top of the screen > Type **Temp 98** in the Enter Message box at the bottom > Tap **Send**.

Receiving a message

To get messages, make sure Annie has your correct phone number. If you plan to change your phone number from the one used to register with Annie, update your number in your settings by tapping on the **Account** tab. If you choose to get SMS text messages, you will get texts just as you would from a friend or family member. If you use the Annie App, you can also elect to receive text alerts that you have gotten a new message from Annie. Then a text message will be sent to you, and you can go into the app to check the message. If you are using the Annie App but have not elected to receive SMS text alerts, then you will need to check periodically for messages from within the app.

Signing up for appointment reminders

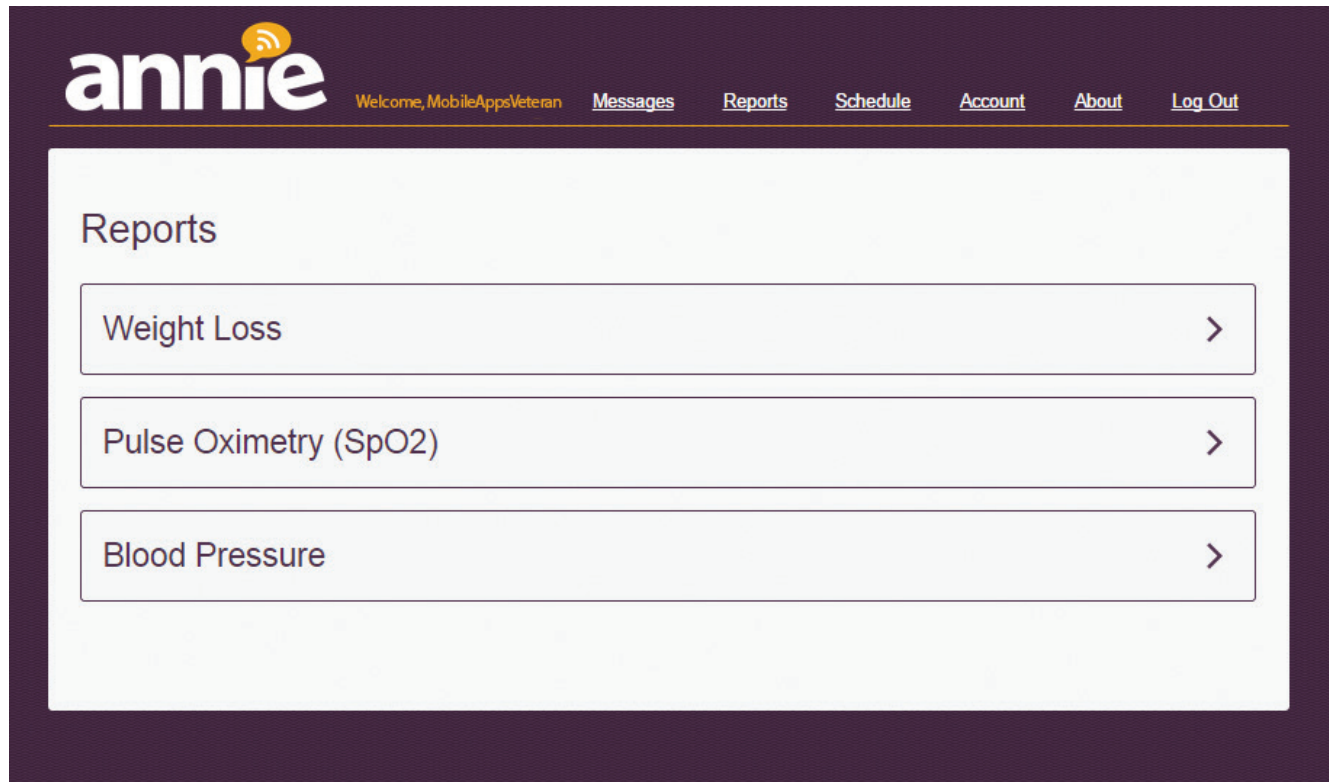
To receive reminders for all of your upcoming VA appointments, you will have to turn on Appointment Reminders. An Appointment Reminder will alert you three days before your scheduled appointment and again the day before. Tap **Account** > Under the Appointment/Info Messages, tap the checkbox next to Appointment Reminders > Tap **Save**.

Signing up for VA medical facility messages

To receive VA medical facility messages from your local VA you will need to turn on VAMC Facility Messages. By doing this, you will get alerts and information about your VA services (e.g., "This facility is closed due to weather" or "Flu shots are available now"). Tap **Account** > Under Appointment/Info Messages, tap the checkbox next to VAMC Facility Messages (Facility Message Notification) > From the Select a Facility drop-down menu, tap the VA medical facility you want messages from > Tap **Save**.

Reports

You will be able to see reports that show your health readings that you sent to Annie when you use the Annie App.



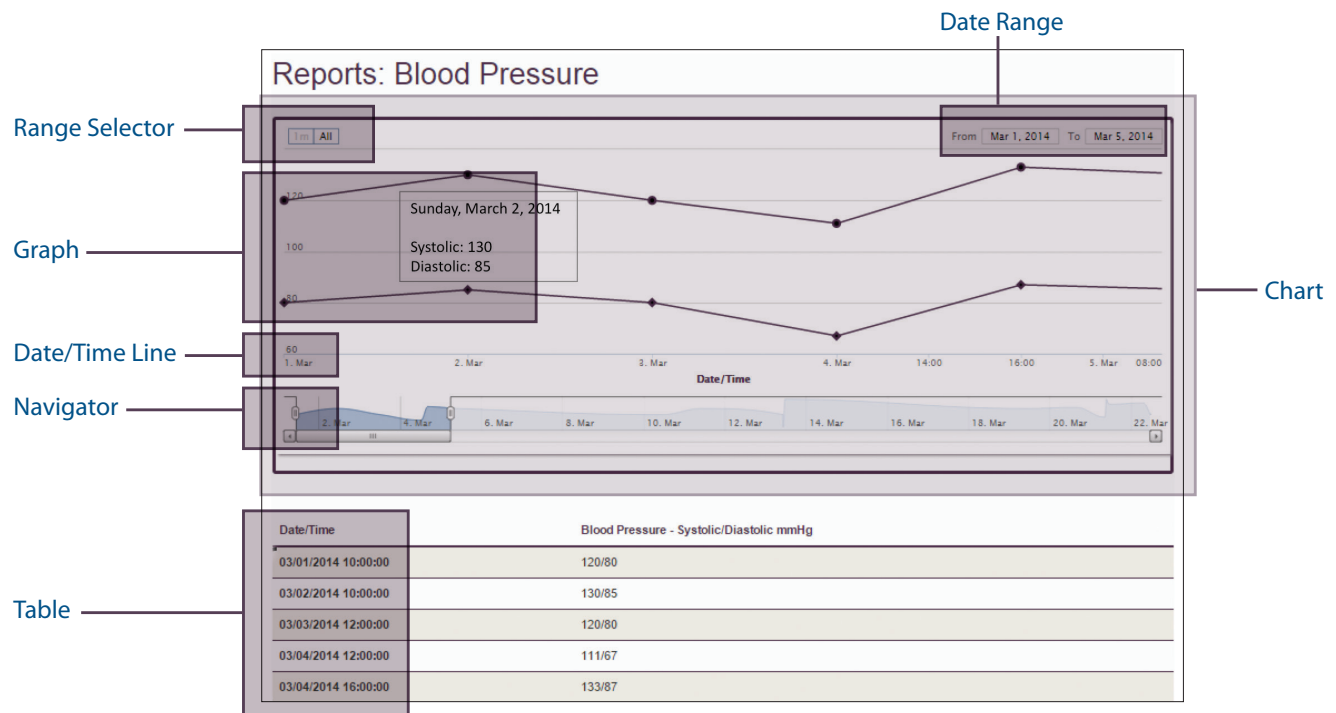
Seeing your reports

Tap the **Reports** tab at the top of the screen > Tap the type of health information you would like to see > Annie will show you a report of your readings (such as blood pressure, weight, etc.) that you sent (**NOTE:** If you do not have reports available to view, you will see this message: "I'm sorry, you currently do not have any reports. Please view your schedule to see when your readings are due."). To return to the Reports screen, tap **Back** in the upper left corner.

Reading details of your reports

The report consists of two sections – a Chart and a Table – and each shows the readings you sent to Annie, as well as the date and time you sent the information:

- Chart – The Chart is the top section of the report. It includes a:
 - Range Selector – Two buttons side-by-side that are labeled 1m and All.
 - Date/Time Line – Horizontal line with dates and times that correspond to the data presented in the graph.
 - Navigator – Shaded blue area with vertical and horizontal scroll bars. The Navigator shows the entirety of data that you have sent to Annie for the selected reading.
 - Date Range – From and To boxes.
 - Graph – Line(s) with dots. You can hover over a dot on the graph, and a pop-up box appears with the date, time and the reading you sent to Annie.
- Table – The Table is the bottom section of the report. It displays the information you sent to Annie (including the date and time you sent the information) in a table format.



Modifying your reports

You can change the information shown in a report by adjusting the chart. There are three ways to modify the Chart:

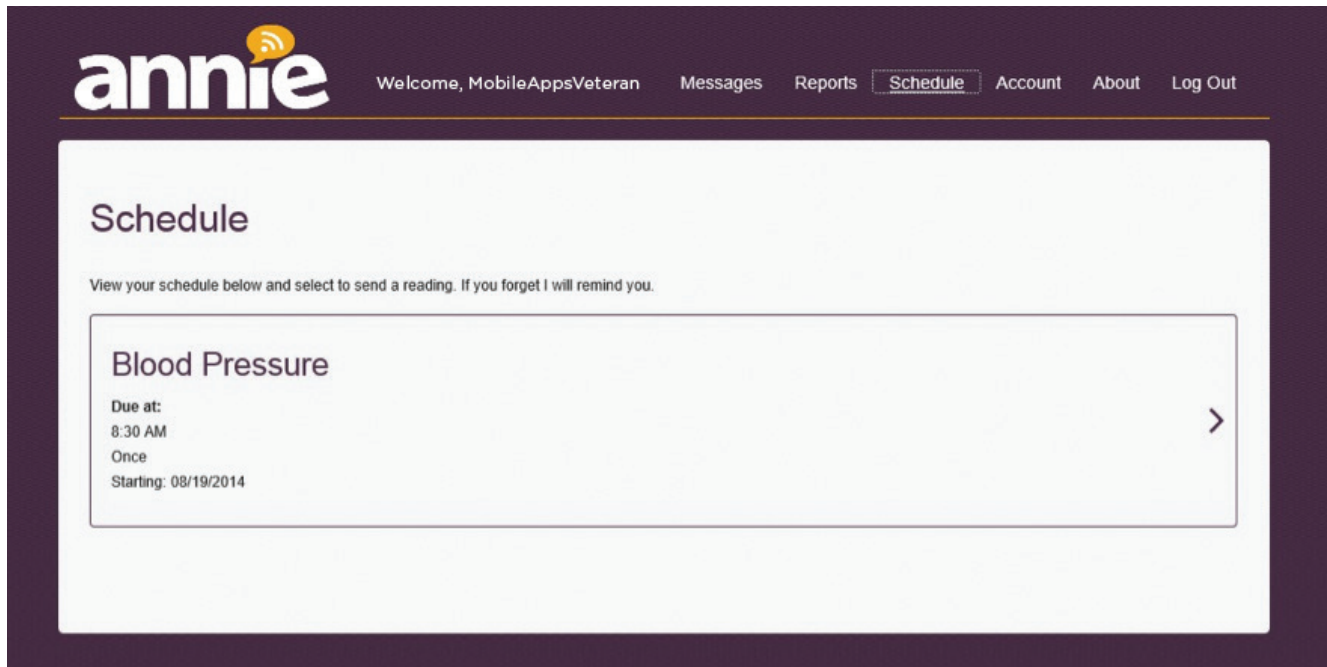
- Range Selector – Tap either **1m** to see only one month's worth of data covered in your reports, or **All** to see all of the data you have sent to Annie. **NOTE:** If you have not submitted at least one month's worth of data, the Range Selector will not be available.
- Date Range – Tap the date in the From and To boxes in the upper right corner of the Chart, and type in a new date. This will update the data in the Graph, Date/Time Line, Navigator and Table.
- Navigator – Use the Navigator to change the readings shown in the Graph and Table. The Date/Time Line will change accordingly, as will the Date Range. If you tap an oval on the Navigator, you can shorten or lengthen the Date Range. If you move the horizontal scroll bar, you can slide to see the dates and data that fall within the set Date Range. For example, if you set the vertical bars so that the window of time is for two months, you can then use the scroll bar to move the two-month time frame from April-June to September-November.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: As noted above, the entirety of data available for a reading is always shown in the Navigator. The graph data shown in the chart and the table depend on how you use the Range Selector, Date Range, and Navigator. Any one of these can be used to limit or expand the data shown. As an example, by dragging the leftmost oval on the Navigator to the right, less data is shown in the chart and table. The Date/Time Line is the horizontal reference for the data shown in the Graph section of the Chart.

NOTES: You may find problems when seeing your readings using Reports. If you encounter difficulties, please do not limit the readings in the reports using the From/To Boxes, or the scroll bar and buttons. Additionally, it is best to view your information in landscape, if viewing on a smartphone.

Schedule

Your schedule provides you with an overview of messages you will receive from Annie (such as messages that ask you to send in your health readings, educational messages, etc.) and when they will be sent.



Viewing your schedule

Tap the **Schedule** tab at the top of the screen > You will see a list of the upcoming messages that will be sent to you by Annie, including requests from Annie for health readings that you are tracking. For each, you can see its name or the type of information requested, when and how often messages are sent, and the date when you started getting messages from Annie. To send in a message pertaining to a reading Annie tracks, tap on the item > All messages that you received and sent to Annie will be shown, including the date and time of the messages > Scroll to the bottom, and type a new message in Enter Message bar > Tap **Send**.

Help and Additional Information

The best way to use Annie is to partner with your VA health care team. If you have questions about using Annie or about your health readings, contact your VA health care team.

Additional Training Materials for the Annie App

More resources, such as a Quick Start Guide, Slideshow and FAQs, can be found on mobile.va.gov/appstore, and search for the app to access the resources. You can access these materials from the app by tapping **About** > A pop-up box will appear that describes the function of the app > Tap the Training Materials hyperlink, and you will go to mobile.va.gov/training/veterans.

Additional information about other available VA Apps may be found at mobile.va.gov/appstore and [VA Mobile Apps General FAQs](#).

Help Desk Information

If you need any help or technical assistance using the Annie App, or to report a problem with the program, call 1-877-470-5947 to speak with a VA representative. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time. For TTY assistance, dial 711.

DS Logon Help

If you have questions about your DS Logon Account, visit mobile.va.gov/dslogon or dial **1-800-983-0937** for assistance.

Emergencies

Annie is not for urgent or emergency issues. If you have an emergency, call your local medical center or dial 911. If you think that any of your health information has been seen by others due to loss or theft, contact your local VA medical facility and ask for the Privacy Officer. To locate your local VA facility, visit VA's Facility Locator: at <http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>.

Appendices

Appendix #1: Project References

This app was developed in collaboration with the United Kingdom's National Health Service according to an approved concept paper. The app was tested to ensure optimal functionality and based on a system in use by the United Kingdom's National Health Service. Subject Matter Experts for the Annie App development were: Neil Evans, MD; Susan Woods, MD, MPH; Keith McInnes, ScD; Beth Powell, RN; and many others.

Appendix #2: Glossary

App – an application or software program that can be accessed through a website or mobile device and is designed to fulfill a particular purpose

DS Logon (Department of Defense Self-Service Logon) – a secure logon ID, created by the Department of Defense (DoD), that verifies the identities of individuals affiliated with DoD or VA and allows them to access secure websites and digital resources across both departments with a single username and password

DS Logon Level 1 (Basic) Account: Provides limited access to website features

DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account: Offers the highest level of access to website features, including access to your VA Electronic Health Record (EHR). (NOTE: You must have a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account to use most of VA's mobile apps.)

Protocol – template(s) of rules governing the information patients receive and send to Annie

SMS (Short Messaging Service) text messaging – an unsecure text messaging capability available on smartphones and basic cell phones

VA – Department of Veterans Affairs

VAMC – VA Medical Center

VA Mobile Health – an initiative that aims to improve Veterans' health by providing technologies to expand care beyond the traditional office visit and that includes the creation of secure mobile apps to leverage the popularity of wireless technologies to support Veterans, Caregivers and VA care teams [More at: mobile.va.gov]